

for exclusion to ascertain whether the proposed project may fall within one or more of the exclusions, and should indicate if it does so on the National Environmental Policy Act Exclusions Form (Form CSRS-1234) provided in the NRICGP Application Kit.

(14) Even though the applicant considers that a proposed project may fall within a categorical exclusion, CSREES may determine that an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary for a proposed project should substantial controversy on environmental grounds exist or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present that may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

[56 FR 57952, Nov. 14, 1991. Redesignated and amended at 60 FR 63368, 63369, Dec. 8, 1995; 61 FR 45319, Aug. 29, 1996]

§3411.5 Evaluation and disposition of applications.

(a) *Evaluation.* All proposals received from eligible applicants and postmarked in accordance with deadlines established in the annual program solicitation shall be evaluated by the Administrator through such officers, employees, and others as the Administrator determines are uniquely qualified in the areas represented by particular projects. To assist in equitably and objectively evaluating proposals and to obtain the best possible balance of viewpoints, the Administrator shall solicit the advice of peer scientists, *ad hoc* reviewers, and/or others who are recognized specialists in the areas covered by the applications received and whose general roles are defined in §§3411.2(j) and 3411.2(k). Specific evaluations will be based upon the criteria established in subpart B, §3411.15, unless CSRS determines that different criteria are necessary for the proper evaluation of proposals in one or more specific program areas, or for specific types of projects to be supported, and announces such criteria and their relative importance in the annual program solicitation. The overriding purpose of these evaluations is to provide information upon which the Administrator may make informed judgments in selecting proposals for ultimate sup-

port. Incomplete, unclear, or poorly organized applications will work to the detriment of applicants during the peer evaluation process. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, all applications should be written with the care and thoroughness accorded papers for publication.

(b) *Disposition.* On the basis of the Administrator's evaluation of an application in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section, the Administrator will (1) approve support using currently available funds, (2) defer support due to lack of funds or a need for further evaluations, or (3) disapprove support for the proposed project in whole or in part. With respect to approved projects, the Administrator will determine the project period (subject to extension as provided in §3411.7(c)) during which the project may be supported. Any deferral or disapproval of an application will not preclude its reconsideration or a reapplication during subsequent fiscal years.

[56 FR 57952, Nov. 14, 1991. Redesignated at 60 FR 63368, Dec. 8, 1995, as amended at 61 FR 45319, Aug. 29, 1996]

§3411.6 Grant awards.

(a) *General.* Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious in the announced program areas under the evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in this part. The date specified by the Administrator as the beginning of the project period shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. All funds granted under this part shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations of this part, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's "Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations" (part 3015 of this title) and the Department's "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to